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PANCHAYATI RAJ

(Incorporating Gram Sevak)

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(Incorporating Gram Sevak)

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1888

PANCHAYATI RAJ AND THE SOCIALIST PATTERN OF SOCIETY

INDIA WAS a land of villages in ancient times. Towns and cities were enlargement of the villages wherein the Chieftain, the small Prince or the big Ruler lived with his palace and the paraphernalia around. Needs of life were simple. There were no machines except those that could be driven by hand or the animal. Between the high and the low, the difference in the standard of life was insignificant. What distinguished the noble from the commoner was leisure, fineness of the fabric worn and in some rare cases, the architecture and the size of the dwelling place. Castes in the villages were recognised. Different castes were assigned different roles. These together made for a balanced community. Differences in wealth and privileges were sanctioned by law and tradition. Nobody questioned. No wonder, the serf and the master served each other. There was no question of one revolting against the other. Equality was unknown. There was no demand for it. Equitability followed naturally.

PANCHAYATI RAJ in a feudal system presents no problem. There are the relatively idle people enjoying affluence who have no worries of earning a livelihood. When the society is an equitable one the idle rich are expected to serve by providing leadership to the community. Such voluntary crowns of thorns alone could provide justification for the nobles to survive and endure in the community. Minus this service, the nobles would have been mere social parasites. Society would have demanded their elimination. This system of the old Indian society could endure over centuries. This was so because social obligations were understood and accepted. Honest efforts were made to discharge these obligations. Trouble arose only when an alien system made its inroad into the organism of Indian life.

BRITISH RULE established itself firmly in the nineteenth century. It demanded props and pumps for its own purposes. British rule came in the wake of a commercial expedition. It came here not to find a home for the expanding population of England. The character of the community in India and its health naturally mattered very little. What mattered was commerce. Commerce demands toll that can be collected immediately. It rarely bothers as to what happens the day after the morrow. No wonder, the first off-shoot of British rule in India was the conversion of the idle nobles from Indian villages into agents of British rule in one guise or the other. Cities and towns sprang up to serve as pumping stations for the blood bank in England. The Indian society naturally broke into pieces. The process worked alike both in cities and villages. On August 15, 1947, we stood facing the debris of two centuries. The only difference was that the British rulers were no longer here to stop us in our effort

at reconstruction or tell us which way we should travel.

THE SOCIALIST Pattern of Society has been accepted by all alike as the goal of India. The only dissentient voice arises from some anachronisms of history and their counterpart in other walks of life. These are the people who or whose fore-fathers acted as the idle nobles in ancient times, the props and pumps during British rule, but who find themselves threatened with unemployment in the Socialist Pattern which gradually unfolds. These ghosts of history must be exorcised. This, however, cannot be done by mantrams; for mantrams do not work in the age of the Sputnik where science alone matters. The community of today therefore has to be vigilant. If it is, the ghosts will beat a silent retreat. If the community is asleep, the ghosts will try to make of it a gala-festival.

THE SOCIALIST Pattern demands that man will have—

(*i*) the right to live,

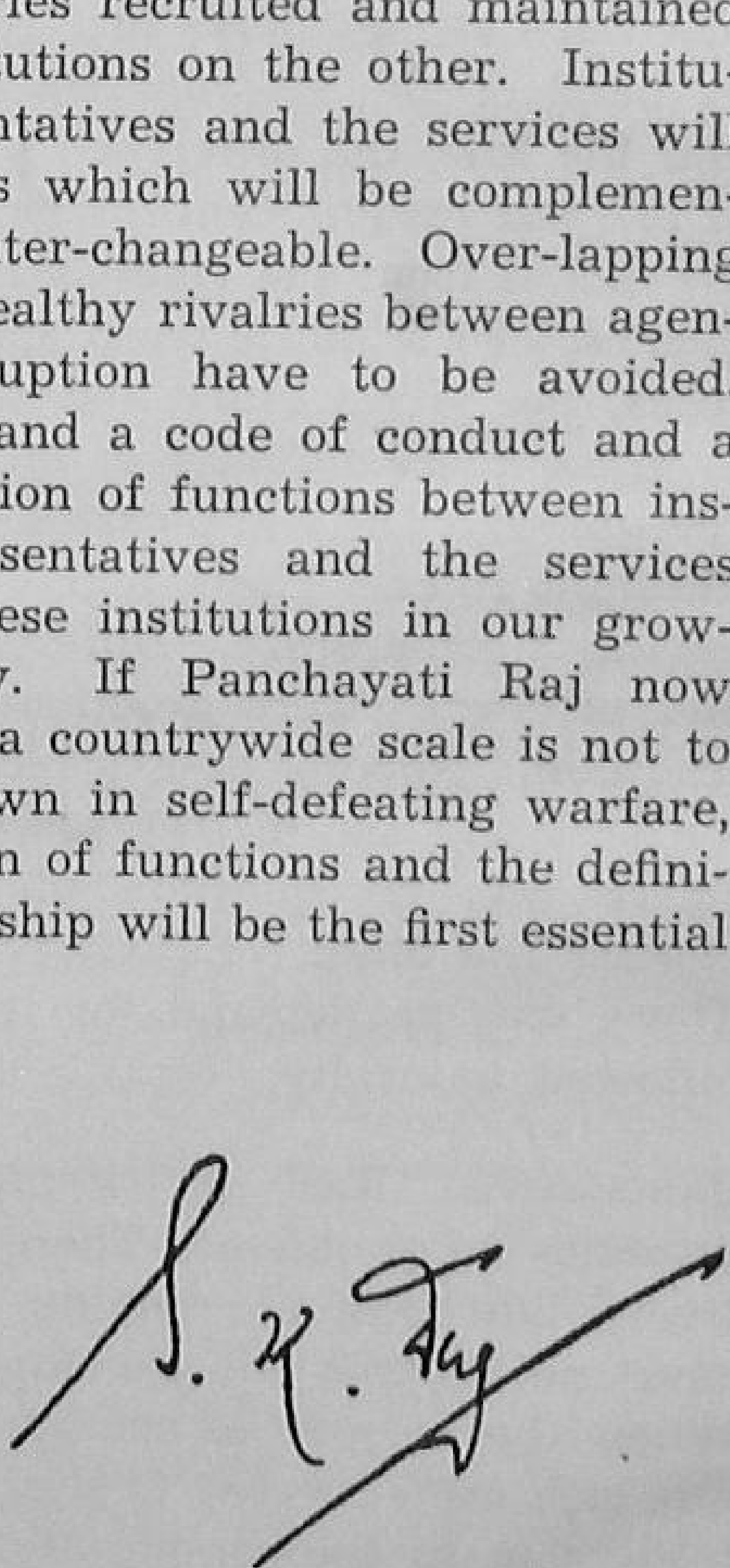
(*ii*) the right to work for a living, and

(*iii*) the right to receive what he earns.

IT COMMANDS that fees for intermediary services shall be determined strictly by the community and not by the intermediaries themselves. This means both a levelling down and a levelling up of the standard of living till the high and the low in the community approximate each other in the means for the wherewithal of life. The high taxation on the rich and the nationalisation of key production had necessarily to follow as a logical course to provide the spring-board from which an effort could be made to build the Socialist Pattern of Society.

A SOCIALIST Pattern means therefore that there will be little idle wealth in our villages. Members of the community, clever and foolish alike, will have to work for a living. There will be a few who could make gift of their time to the community in a major way. The Socialist Pattern of Society in the present world context demands a progressively rising standard of life. Therefore, there will be corresponding increase in the complexity of organisations that will govern the life of the community. Panchayats or Cooperatives under Socialist Pattern will mean much more complex organisation than we have known in the past. There will of course be representatives of people in these institutions to provide to them leadership and administrative guidance. These will be voluntary contributions by the leading members of the community according to their respective interests and specialisations in return for the dignity their office confers on them. But the day to day responsibility for housekeeping in these institutions will have to be discharged by full-time or major-part-time workers who have necessarily to receive compensation for services rendered.

PANCHAYATI RAJ and Co-operatives in the Socialist Pattern of "Tomorrow" will, therefore, mean representative institutions of people on the one hand, and paid services and functionaries recruited and maintained by these institutions on the other. Institutional representatives and the services will have functions which will be complementary but not inter-changeable. Over-lapping of efforts, unhealthy rivalries between agencies and corruption have to be avoided. This will demand a code of conduct and a clear delimitation of functions between instutional representatives and the services which man these institutions in our growing democracy. If Panchayati Raj now ushered in on a countrywide scale is not to get bogged down in self-defeating warfare, the delimitation of functions and the definition of relationship will be the first essential prerequisite.



PLANNING FROM "KRISHI BHAVAN"

VIDUR

DAY IN AND day out, as I had been entering the imposing five-storeyed building known as Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi and looked at the hundreds of Babus working there, dressed in their spotless white, I wondered if the villager, the "true son of the soil" in whose name the mighty fabric has been raised would ever be one of its visitors. For once my expectations came true when a group of 23 Gram Sevaks and Pradhans from 13 different villages of India, adjudged to be the best for the current year in their respective States, met at Krishi Bhavan and discussed their common problems and plans for village development. They were accorded the usual V.I.P. treatment. The cool arena of the air-conditioned Committee Room was in sharp contrast to the dusty *'loo'* of the open fields they are used to. They deliberated for four days and had a free and frank discussion with the top officials and Advisers of the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation including the Minister himself.

UNIQUE MEETING

That this was a unique meeting became apparent from the very start. Instead of the usual bunch of officials dressed in their smart summer wear, we had simple villagers dressed in a variety of costumes ranging from the Kerala *dhoti* to the Kashmiri fur cap. At this meeting, more than one regional language had to be used and communication had to be maintained through interpretors. We had thus the real India with her unity in diversity reflected in this Conference. Before now the meetings and conferences had primarily been the concern of the Government officials and Advisers. Barring the Informal Consultative Committee in which the Members of Parliament participated, no serious attempt had ever been made at the national level to associate ground level workers with such meetings. The result was that these deliberations had tended to be somewhat ideological and unrealistic. Those charged with the responsibility of framing the programmes and policies of Community Development realised this lacuna and they sought to gain the right perspective. The present Conference provided the needed corrective. Here were perpersons, the best of the lot that the different States could throw up this year from inside the movement. They were no mere talkers. They had achieved substantial results and they could speak with authority on village problems.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

The four-day conference left the top administrators and policy-makers of the programme gasping for breath. They tried to probe into the secrets of success claimed by each field worker in his State. By analysing the different techniques employed by him, they formulated certain basic conclusions which should be of help to others in the field.

The Pradhan from Rajasthan claimed that the villagers have also something to teach and that it is not the officers' alone who had a monopoly of wisdom. He pleaded for a little humility and willingness to learn from the villagers. An outstanding feature of this Conference was the absence of pedantic demagogy and vain argumentation. Most of the participants were good speakers, but they relied more on sound common sense than on oratory. They expressed several basic truths in a simple and telling manner.

What was the single important factor responsible for the success of the programme? Their reply was apocryphal. In the story of the elephant and six blind men, the animal assumed different forms before each person. It can never be said with certainty as to what constituted the success of the programme exclusively. "On the other hand", they observed, "the success has been rather due to a combination of factors. Circumstances differed from place to place and therefore no single line of action could be laid down to ensure success." Wherever they had a Pradhan with a progressive outlook, the pace of development work was

accelerated. Similarly whenever the Extension staff, particularly the Gram Sevak happened to be enthusiastic and devoted to the cause, the results achieved were impressive. "But to achieve the very best results", they argued, "it required a combination of the right type of persons—the officials and non-officials". "How was it that the villages in your neighbourhood which had almost the same set of officials and non-officials working did not come up to your standard ? What held up their progress?" Someone asked. Immediate was the reply from the Rajasthan Sarpanch, "Yes. They did not, because there is room for only one to top the list. The neighbouring villages have also done well, and may be some of them have been a close second." He quipped : "Let us not be impatient about the pace of our progress. After all rural development is not a type of work that can be achieved overnight. A new look is however overtaking all our villages. Some have come up rather quickly. Others will take time."

BRUTAL FRANKNESS

Apart from robust common sense, our villagers have retained a certain independence of spirit and brutal frankness which hundreds of years of foreign subjugation and grinding poverty could not undo. This perhaps constitutes their best asset for the success of the Panchayati Raj. They had no one to please or to flatter. They had nothing to hide. They spoke out their minds frankly and fearlessly to all the top officials and Advisers of the Ministry including the Minister himself. That they were able to do so is equally a tribute to the Ministry itself which is keen to encourage the right type of democratic atmosphere so that it percolates down to the lower level of the District, the Block and the village. It was the Pradhan from U.P. who bewailed that most of the extension staff including the BDO himself comes from the urban area and as such was not fitted to serve the rural area. The Pradhan concluded : "Sir, it is only the sons and relatives of you people, the Babus, who can go to the Agricultural Colleges. How can children of our poor people attend them ? We are at a disadvantage." There was force in the Pradhan's argument which could not be lightly brushed aside. The non-official representative also criticised the inefficiency, the inordinate delay associated with red tapism and corrupt practices in the administration and pleaded that these defects should be removed if better results are desired. The Pradhans agreed that some villages had made progress under the impact of the C.D. programme, but this was wholly inadequate and more effective and widespread results could be achieved if greater attention was paid towards the needs of the rural area.

BASIC FACTS

An analysis of the techniques adopted by the Gram Sevaks and Pradhans in different States to achieve success in their respective fields revealed some remarkable common lines of approach. One of these was to organise popular institutions of farmers and youth. Step by step the interest and enthusiasm of the farmers was aroused and they were led to adopt the improved and scientific agricultural practices in the place of the traditional methods. The Sarpanch from Maharashtra pointed out that the Yuvak Mandal in his village participated in cultural and social activities only, in the beginning. But as it grew popular, it began to spread its sphere of activity to agriculture as well. The young farmers proved of inestimable help in bringing their adult members under the influence of modern farming techniques.

The Pradhan from Kerala stressed the importance of organisation and referred to the work of Food Production Council which functioned in close coordination with the village Panchayat. Most of the members of the Council were progressive farmers and had been trained in one of the Camps organised for training Gram Sahayaks. The Gram Sahayaks had usually proved extremely useful as voluntary extension agents.

A basic fact that emerged as a result of these discussions was that comparatively greater progress was achieved because of people's organisations like the Panchayats and Cooperatives having taken an active interest in

the programme. In Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh and to some extent in Uttar Pradesh also, the Panchayats played a dominant role in pushing forward the development work. The representative from Rajasthan stressed the need for strengthening the Panchayats by increasing their local resources of income. One of the suggestions made was that all governmental contracts should as far as possible be given to the Panchayats in preference to professional contractors.

An important factor which has invariably helped in boosting up food production is the building up of irrigation facilities and the maximum utilisation of available water supply. The Pradhan from Maharashtra cited an interesting example of how community spirit was kindled in village Salgare where 140 owners voluntarily offered the use of their wells for irrigating the parched lands of their neighbours.

The husbanding of local manurial resources presented a complex problem. Not all the representatives from various States could claim to have succeeded completely in solving this age-old problem of turning waste into wealth. The idea of having cow-dung gas plant was appreciated by them all. But it had not been given a popular trial anywhere uptill now. The Pradhans from Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Assam did boast of at least one compost pit per family and in active use.

For the multiplication and easy availability of improved seeds, it was agreed on all hands that the best method was to supply the nucleus seed to a few registered growers in each village on suitable terms and to arrange its purchase and supply through the local cooperative society.

An important factor on which the unsophisticated village representatives and the experts according to their recent trend, seemed to agree was that a stage was soon being reached when the V.L.W. with his present standard of technical skill and equipment might prove far too short of the requirements of the villagers, and therefore either there should be specialists at the village level or provision be made for higher technical facilities to the Gram Sevaks so that they might be in a better position to cater to the growing technical needs and requirements of the people.

At the end of it all, everyone felt that something had been achieved; each one had gained from the other. The ivory-tower of the official hierarchy had been stormed by a band of successful field workers.

COURAGE—My Heart !

(Pages from a Block Development Officer's Diary)

ANIL C. SHAH

Shri Anil C. Shah, Vice Principal (Panchayat) at the Institute for Instruction on Community Development, Dehra Dun, who has written this Diary is no new-comer to our programme. He has been closely and emotionally attached to it ever since its inception, and was one of the first batch of Project Executive Officers on October 2, 1952. Though the identity of persons and places in this Diary is fictitious, it will be difficult to draw up a more faithful picture of our programme from a BDO's study. It is for the Sarpanches and Pradhans to get a full measure of the various headaches which assail the poor B.D.O. Sahibs and which may very soon rack the brains of our village leaders.

February 8

To-DAY, I am happy. I had heard about "Leap Forward" in China. To-day I saw it in Shekhpur, while returning from Tikora. The villagers and our Vinay Chandra were constructing a small house about which I had no previous knowledge. I stopped there for a while and I was told that during the recent Shramadan drive, the Panchayat Ghar was constructed but some bricks were left unused and the villagers decided to construct a house for a widow. Perhaps, this was the woman who had taken a vow to water 50 trees every day. What a good idea! But can the block take credit for it? I think we can, because it is a "Leap Forward" by a village, in which our programme has helped to develop a community spirit and also to give a concrete expression to it. I wonder whose original idea it was—of Vinay Chandra or of the Sarpanch? Any way I am very happy that Vinay Chandra, who had created the first impression of being sophisticated, has real interest in village life. He has been doing well in other fields also. I think he will make a good V.L.W. It would be good to take the Divisional Commissioner to Shekhpur, when he visits my block on the 14th February.

February 14

Which I had hoped would be a day of glory for me, turned out to be a day of disgrace. The Commissioner did not like anything in Shekhpur. I was pulled up and ridiculed for doing showy business and for not concentrating on community development proper. What shocked me more was that the Collector, who knows my work quite well did not try to help me. Now, I am asked to concentrate on food production and small savings. "How many pass books for cumulative time deposit have been opened in your block ?", I was asked by the Commissioner. When I gave him the real figure of 35, he turned to the Collector and asked him what was the highest number in a block in his district. Though the Commissioner was happy to learn that one block was able to open as many as 300, I am really surprised how Agrawal could manage all this in spite of the pressure of sale of T.B. Seals, sale of Red Cross Seals and other campaigns!

February 25

I do not know if I should be happy or unhappy to-day. In our staff meeting when I tried to impress upon the V.L.Ws. that our block was considered a back-number in the Small-Savings Drive and the achievement in the Vijpur block was ten times our own, Devadutt revealed that a V.L.W. in the Vijpur block, who was his class mate during the training told him that to fulfil that target of small-savings, some V.L.Ws. invested their own money to open the required number of Pass Books and that too in the name of the villagers. Those V.L.Ws. were now afraid that they might not be able to get back their money from the villagers! Poor V.L.Ws.! To reach targets and to get a good chit from the Collector at the cost of V.L.Ws.! I wonder if Agrawal knows how the V.L.Ws. achieved the targets given to them. I will discuss with him when we meet in our monthly meeting on the 3rd. In any case, I am happy that V.L.Ws. of my block do not

have any such pressure to achieve targets.

March 4

It appears that this month, which is every year a month of strain, is going to be a month of trial. Very high targets are fixed for every block for green manuring, Japanese Method and that terrible business of Small Savings. There is no use arguing. Brij Mohan tried to explain that there was no fallow land in his block and most of it was *ushar* land, which made it difficult to raise by 50% the achievement of the previous year. The D.A.O. asked a counter question, "If you do not achieve increase by 50% of the area under green manuring in your block, how can I achieve my district target of increasing the area under green manuring by 50%?" The D.A.O. said that he had already committed himself in the zonal meeting. Brij Mohan was right when he said that knowing the condition of some of the blocks in the district it would have been better if the D.A.O. had not made such a commitment. But what was the reply? "When all the D.A.Os. readily agreed, how can I stand apart? I do not want to spoil my reputation and future." Then he asked us, "I would not consider you competent, if you can not commit yourself in the face of a challenge."

What challenge? For whose good? Why do they teach us in the training centres about consultation, when what is required is taking up challenges! But for whose good? For 'my reputation and my future'! But at whose cost? After the meeting Brij Mohan told us that in fact his last year's quota of senai had not been sold out even though he had showed as sold in the report because he had distributed the seed to the V.L.Ws. How did the V.L.Ws. manage to pass it on to the farmers, we did not enquire. Better not know about it. But how Brij Mohan will be able to distribute and pass on 50% more this year? We could see worry and frustration on his face. I feel sorry that the other B.D.Os. including myself could not support him and say 50% increase was too much even for our blocks. We seem to have lost courage. We have become timid. This is all new to me. I do not know what has happened to me.

Agrawal is becoming a real problem in the district. He is ready for any targets. Who cares to know whether he actually achieves them or only shows them on paper? Nor does anybody bother to find out how he achieves them. Last time he made arrangements with the Post Master of doing a little window-dressing by showing deposits on the 31st March and withdrawals on the 1st April. He has achieved saturation in Japanese method within two years and 75% in green manuring. He has become the favourite of the Collector and naturally expects promotion. On the other hand, I feel that I am fast losing my reputation. Why worry? I have still a reputation for sincerity and in this programme sincerity counts the most—despite what people may say to the contrary.

March 20

Every day I am getting funds from different departments to be spent before the 31st March. It is true that such must be the case in other departments also. But it is a different matter with us, because we have not to pass on this money to contractors, but to the village people. How bewildered were the Panches of Ratanpur, when I told them that I was prepared to give funds for an additional room for the school building, for a weaving shed and for making pucca compost pits, provided they could finish all these in a week. Let the people be bewildered, but I must spend all the allotted money this year, because the District Development Officer has told us that we were going to be judged by our performance in spending all the allotment including the funds received from the departments. I fear, I am going to spoil my record this year. It is clearly indicated in the warning contained in the monthly evaluation letter from the Collector.

April 1

Without anybody playing a joke on me, I have become a fool! All that I could spend amounts to only 78% of the

allotment in spite of all that I could do and this year I have done things, which I would not have even thought of doing before 5 years. But then I was a S.E.O. full of idealism and without "practical experience". Now I have learnt how to spend more money by giving large unnecessary advances, by getting wrong completion certificates from the Overseer and so on. But thank God, I have not done any dishonest thing so far.

But this is not going to help me, because Agrawal is bound to show 100% expenditure and some more B.D.Os. might spend 90% or more.

My whole body is aching.. ..I have not slept for days. What shall I do? I know I shall not get sleep. Shall I first finish the report that I have to send....Damn this report business. Let me go to some village and meet the people. Yes, I would go to Raigarh and check up the progress of street paving in the Harijan locality and also participate in the marriage of Tulsi Ram's son.

April 8

Brij Mohan is doomed. He should not have thrown counter challenge to the D.D.C. when he requested him to visit his Block to pursuade the farmers with *ushar* land to use green manure and achieve the target of 50% increase. I think the word "talker" provoked him. Actually, the D.D.C. had said "you talkers" and he meant all of us. But Brij Mohan took it to heart. He is too sensitive....rather he is still sensitive, in spite of all the experiences.

It is, however, a shame for all of us, who knew Brij Mohan that we could not defend him. Although, I suggested that the D.D.C. might send an agricultural expert to Brij Mohan's block, etc., what was I told for this suggestion? "Don't gang up. Do not try your extension methods on me!"

As our superiors have authority to compel us, should we not be given powers to compel the people also?

I must be frank at least in my diary. I have started wondering what could be the real motive behind encouraging us to achieve high targets. It appears as the Dy. Director had hinted that he gave high targets to the D.A.Os. to make his division number one in the State. Perhaps, to earn "reputation and future". Perhaps, the Director might be whipping up the Dy. Directors for high targets to keep him in the first place in the country. But what is the future for the Director, who has already reached the top? I do not know, but I fear I am fast becoming a cynic and, therefore, I think that there must be some other motive and not simply to raise food production. Could this be true for the Development Commissioner! What about the people still higher up? Might be they are interested in these things only to build up their reputation and ensure future? What has happened to me? How silly of me to suspect everybody, because I am asked to do things which appear too difficult!

April 12

What has happened is far worse than I had feared. My performance is put at 56% in physical targets and 78% in financial. I am, therefore, inefficient. I could not help overhearing the Collector talking to the S.D.O. whether I was fit to hold the charge of a gazetted post. It is quite possible that I might be reverted. Why was the Collector annoyed? It occurs to me that the real reason might be what happened at the staff meeting. Of course, Vinay Chandra should have given up arguing and kept mum. But the Collector also went too far when he said, "I know such V.L.Ws. who bring bad name to your programme. Look, the way he argues "my experience, my experience." What does he mean? Has no one else any experience? If that implement could work in all V.L.W. circles of Vijpur block, why not here? I must tell you, I want to weed out useless people like this chap." Vinay Chandra was stunned and his face bloodless and white. Helpless as I was, something terrible seized me from within and I said, "Sir, he is my best V.L.W. and there is truth in what he says. I

have also seen...." Why did I say "The best V.L.W."? This was an open revolt and I could have safely said that what he was sying was something interesting etc. My siding this way is not going to help him and now I will be doomed. Unfortunately, all this has happened at the time of writing of C.R. Whom can I blame? It is all my fault. I have still remained too sensitive—too much. I could have taken a tip from the Tehsildar and entertained the Collector properly, at least his Steno and his peons. But now it is too late to learn all this. I have wasted much of my time in villages and...Sushila knows that for some time past I am disturbed, but she was really surprised when I asked her to look up the advertisement columns for some suitable post for us. Poor Sushila! She has been trying to help me in her former lady S.E.O. style by going with me to villages in order to create interest in the village women for our programme. How often she has looked after a large number of villagers coming to meet me when I was away. But let me not be sentimental. It is all over. It is all over.

April 24

I think that it need not be over....I should continue even if I am reverted as S.E.O. Sushila will resume her work as lady S.E.O. and we will pull on. To-day's experiences have again restored my drooping spirits. This afternoon I had gone to Shekhpur with Dr. Singh, the District Animal Husbandry Officer for doing a large number of inocculations against the rinderpest epidemic. We could, however, leave the village only at 11 in the night not because the innoculations had held us up. The villagers had arranged a big programme of send-off to Vinay Chandra, who has been transferred from my block to Agrawal's block with a view to give him a chance to learn and improve himself. The whole village had collected together in the temple compound to have the last joint feast with Vinay Chandra. It was such a moving sight that not only myself, but Dr. Singh was also deeply touched. He asked why I had transferred him. I told him that the orders came from District Headquarters. Then he asked, "Why did you not oppose it?" What I could I say?

When we left Shekhpur that night with Vinay Chandra with us in the jeep, all the villagers were there including children, and some of the people were in tears. I had to exercise great self-control to conceal my emotions. The words of the villagers, "Do not forget us! Do not forget us!" continued to echo in my ears and I asked myself, "Who says there is not appreciation of good work?"

On the way back we saw Dayal Chacha slowly moving on the road. I stopped the jeep and asked him where he was going. He replied that he was going to the Health Centre to bring the doctor to his village and he further explained that a shepherd of his village was away with his flock and his only son was getting convulsions. I asked him "But why an old man like you should go out at such an odd hour to bring the doctor? Can't you send a young man?" The reply I got is unforgettable. "I am the Sarpanch, so far as possible I must go myself. From Jaingaon I will take a horse and bring the doctor in no time." Immediately I took Dayal Chacha in the jeep. As we drove ahead, the sound of the jeep started mingling in my mind the words: "Do not forget us, do not forget us!" and "I am the Sarpanch, I must go myself!" Perhaps, Dayal Chacha was also taking all the trouble for his 'reputation and future'. But what a difference? In a flash it struck me that I have been working for Dayal Chachas and not for the D.C. or D.D.C. or anybody. I have no reason and even no right to leave them. I have already told Sushila not to look up the advertisements columns.

LETTERS

Self-help or State-help?

Sir,

"Cooperatives are multiplied but cooperation lags behind". I read these words in a recent issue of *Kurukshetra.* But let me tell the readers of *Panchayati Raj* that things were not always as bad as this in the past. Since the Cooperative Act was passed in 1904 and again in 1912, numerous cooperatives have been organised by non-officials, Honorary Assistant Registrars according to the strictest principles of cooperation. There were supervising unions and federations of the non-officials to rectify the defects, to disseminate principles of cooperation and to encourage people to learn through their errors. The disputes were heard by non-official arbitrators till recently. The Central Banks were not entrusted with additional, undesirable supervision work besides their normal duty of financing the affiliated cooperatives.

What is the position now? Now every branch of work is being controlled by the State officials. Self-help is changed into State help. Mutual help is dwindling because of factions created by political divisions and petty low-paid officials out for self-aggrandisement. Equity has disappeared with official interference and dependence. Only the representatives of the Primary cooperatives should be on the executive body of the Central Bank and not the urban depositors and individual shareholders. Political monopoly of the executive is anti-cooperative.

It will be in conformity with the spirit of democratic decentralisation if the three basic institutions are left entirely in the hands of people for organisation, for rectification by close supervision and for reconciliation by arbitration. Cooperation can be restored only by the people themselves. It can be built much better by the enthusiasm of non-official workers than by the discipline of paid State employees. There is a fundamental difference in the work of a *Karmi* and a *Karmachari.*

The posts of Panchayat organisers, Panchayat supervisors, social educational officers and organisers, primary school inspectors and even some percentage of B.D.O.s can be entrusted, on an experimental basis, to the non-officials for better and accelerated progress.

Yours etc.

24-4-60 *S. N. Pattanayak,*
Sarpanch.
Sergada Gram Panchayat,
Orissa.

* * *

Speed versus Extension

Sir,

The greatest enemy of our programme today is the speed with which we are trying to convert the rural India. Even after about 12 years we are planning to achieve greater food production through J.M.P.C., U.P. method wheat cultivation and the like and every year we have targets of these programmes on the basis of optimum possibilities. We have never stopped to think why year after year we have the same demonstrations, the same targets,—except that the number is more in the succeeding years,—and still we find after each campaign that the programme has not taken roots.

Extension methods are slow but sure and require a complete revision of our policies. The use of jeep for food production drive is contrary to the extension principles. It is giving rather disappointing results because we tend to work during the campaigns on a tension level with only one objective, that is to achieve target so that our achievements may not look inferior to those of others. The first step should be the removal of jeeps. Then we shall not be expected to achieve miracles and shall have enough time to make the programme self-propelling and self-generating.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I give an instance of the success of the Extension method in my area. Potato crop was invariably damaged by an attack of Epilechna beetle in the hot weather of April and May. The demonstrations were arranged by the Block authorities in 1953. The results

were astonishing for the people. Up to 1956 demonstrations and extension proceeded hand in hand and from 1956 to 1959 it has been possible to saturate the entire area with a new method of increased production. The cultivators have now their own spray machine on village basis, they pay for the insecticide and do the spraying themselves. The request for spraying on cost basis by the Plant Protection Authorities was made by the Block authorities in 1957. After this year's spraying operations it is proposed to withdraw even the demonstration equipment relating to this item and to issue it again on payment at 50% of the book value.

Due to the result of this single item production of potatoes has increased in this area by at least 50%. In village Rawna near Chakrata yield of potato has gone up from 50 mds. to 1,300 mds. according to the Pradhan.

Yours etc.

27-4-60
Chakrata, U.P.
R. N. Kwatra, B.D.O.

* * *

Low Paid Village Workers

Sir,

Village officials and non-officials are being called upon to play an increasingly vital role in the new set up of the Panchayati Raj. On the whole, they are not a well-paid lot and they suffer acutely whenever their salaries and allowances are withheld for any length of time. Recently, the Kurnool Taluq Village Officers' Association complained that its members had not been paid their travelling and daily allowances for three years and expressed their inability to attend a Conference because of lack of resources. It is to be hoped that the Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads would devise such a machinery for payment that undue delay in the disbursement of dues is avoided. It will be too much to expect people with small means to continue evincing interest in public affairs which generally costs them considerable time and money unless prompt payment of honoraria is ensured.

Yours etc.

5-5-60 *P. Sundaram.*
Madras.

* * *

"Panchayati Raj"

Sir,

Gram Nalam which means the welfare of the village is the Monthly Journal of Madras Government and has recently brought out a supplement of 130 closely printed pages in Tamil on the Madras Panchayats Act of 1958. This will give the Panches, Sarpanches and other non-officials connected with the C.D. programme an opportunity to have a full knowledge of their fundamental rights and responsibilities as envisaged in the Act. However, I may be permitted to say that the terseness of the language and the cumbersome manner of its presentation robs it of much of its value. It would have been much better if this were published in the form of interesting articles embodying the salient points of the Act. It would be in the fitness of things if the need for publishing Panchayat laws in a simple and interesting manner was realised by other States who are soon coming into the orbit of Panchayati Raj, and are about to enact their respective Panchayat Acts in the near future.

Yours etc.

1-5-1960 *M. Dorai Raju.*
Changleput.

* * *

The other side of the Medal

Sir,

A lawyer of Qanongoyan, Gonda District recently expressed his considered opinion that mostly cases are decided by the Panchayats on the basis of group loyalties and class interests and consequently their judgments lack reasoning. The ignorant Panches devoid of education, innocent of rights and obligations, influenced by factions and party politics in the villages, are likely to make a mess of the whole business. We had therefore, better be more vigilant while transferring greater powers to the Panches.

Yours etc.

20-4-60 *M. Abraham.*
Ghazipur.

TEACHERS UNDER THE PANCHAYATI RAJ

(From a Special Correspondent)

"EDUCATION of children is more important than even developmental works"; "Teacher is the builder of the nation"; and "To honour the teacher is our duty"—placards bearing these significant mottoes were hung in the collonaded hall of the Ramdev temple at Birantiya, Raipur Block in Pali District of Rajasthan, which was the venue of a three-day orientation seminar attended by all primary school teachers, members of the Panchayat Samiti, Panchas and Sarpanchas and Gram Sevaks in the Block.

CREATIVE SLOGANS

Other mottoes displayed included: "Panch is the image of justice"; "Cooperation of the panch and sarpanch will inspire the teacher"; "Failure of Panchayati Raj would spell disaster to the country"; "Character is the greatest need of Man and also his best defence"; "India can march ahead only through mutual cooperation of the teacher and the panch".

The seminar, which met from April 30 to May 2, was convened by the Panchayat Samiti of Raipur Block to discuss the problems which have arisen as a result of the transfer of the control of primary schools to the Panchayat Samitis. Seventh in a series which originated in Rajsamand Block, it was presided over by the livewire of this new educational movement, the Poet-Playwright, Shri N. N. Acharya, Deputy Speaker of the Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha.

These seminars, being organised by the Panchayat Samitis, are aimed at finding solutions to the newly emerging problems through association and discussion between the teachers, the sarpanchas and panchas, as also the Gram Sevaks.

As a result of the deliberations of the earlier seminars, Panchayat Samitis of four Blocks have already provided, at their own initiative and cost, wash basins, towels and soaps, hair oil and combs to teachers working in about 400 primary schools within their jurisdiction, to enable them to voluntarily devote about half an hour in the morning, before the classes begin, to cleanse the faces and hands of pupils and to comb their hair—sometimes even to wash his clothes, if these are dirty. The teacher repeats this performance for fifteen minutes in the afternoon, before the school closes.

NEW ROLE

This voluntary work done by the teachers has imparted a new sense of cleanliness to school children and is also making a perceptible impact on the cleanliness of the village homes. The fact that the teacher has to do this job, which is essentially that of the parents, has posed a challenge to the latter.

To establish closer personal contacts between the teachers and the parents of the children for a discussion of the progress made by each child, Parents' Committees (Abhivavak Samitis) have been set up in many of the villages.

According to the Panchayat Samitis' decision, the village teacher is now being increasingly associated with the working of *ad hoc* bodies dealing with various aspects of the life of the village community. Many of the schools in the four Blocks also observe a "Good Behaviour" day in the week—normally a Saturday—to improve the behaviour pattern of the children, the aim being the inculcation of such values as would make the school children of one Panchayat Samiti "identifiable from another—solely by their social behaviour."

"GURU PURNIMA"

The new trend was symbolised by a one-act play entitled "Guru Purnima", written by Shri N. N. Acharya and staged by a dramatic group for the benefit of the participants of the Birantiya seminar. Written with the idea of throwing in sharp focus the changing role of the school teacher in the life of the community, the play draws attention to the prevailing indiscipline among students. This indiscipline leads to the expulsion of some pupils from the school. The expulsion of students,

in its turn, raises the tempers of the parents who become hostile to the teacher. The resultant situation is discussed by the members of the Gram Panchayat. In the meanwhile, the teachers themselves discuss the importance of their new role. They now devote closer personal attention to the school children, teach them good manners and the importance of cleanliness. The changed behaviour of the children, and their neat and tidy habits, impress the parents—in particular the members of the panchayat. This brings about a change of heart on the part of members of the Gram Panchayat, and they decide to restore the teacher to the ancient pedastal of honour, where the teacher was given the honour due to a hero, who performed acts of bravery, not so much from the mercenary point of view as for performing his duty, in the larger interest of the community. The closing scene of the play portrays the members of the Gram Panchayat and parents of the village children garlanding and honouring the teacher on the day specifically appointed for the purpose, namely "Guru Purnima".

The seminar at Birantiya, as also those that preceded it, the participants and organisers were emphatic, were not organised with a view to arriving at any decisions; they were organised rather to stimulate collective thinking on the part of the primary school teachers, the panchas and sarpanchas, through free and frank discussions. And deliberations of these seminars, they added, had pinpointed the radical change that has been brought about in areas where Panchayati Raj has been introduced.

The Birantiya seminar's participants seemed to agree that what was needed now was education along lines which should make the school teacher the hub of the social and cultural life of the village: "the teacher not only moulds the lives of children, but also influences, in a distant but direct way, the lives of parents at home". If the teacher were to function as a catalyst in the life of the village community, it was equally important to ensure that parents cooperated and what the child learnt at school for 5 hours in the day was not forgotten in the atmosphere of the home, where he passed the rest of the day.

The teachers of the primary schools of Raipur Panchayat Samiti, who never seemed to have met collectively before, generally agreed that they were themselves the "children of society and a part of it", and that they would certainly help bring about a transformation in the lives of the village communities through the school children, provided they had the fullest cooperation and—what is more important—respect and esteem of the leaders of the village.

The younger section among the teachers complained that they were not getting their due from society, that the minimum salary of the teacher should be raised to Rs. 100 per month, that he should also be appointed Secretary of the Village Cooperative Society, in charge of the village post office and agent for LIC policies, in addition to the provision of a free house and free medical aid. Still more important, they said, was the need of goodwill and cooperation from the Gram Panchayat, or the Vikas Mandal, which should take on itself the duty of ensuring the attendance of all children of the age group of 6 to 12.

The older section of the primary school teachers, however, seemed to feel that, if the country marched ahead, the lot of the average villager would also improve and so would that of the teacher. He was prepared to work harder, one of them said, if the panchayat extended to him its fullest cooperation. An old teacher narrated a story to drive home his viewpoint. A Rishi, he said, saw that none of the half a dozen people bathing in the river, cared to save a scorpion from drowning. He, therefore, lifted the scorpion with his left hand, only to be stung. He rescued it again by his right hand—to be stung again. When the people made fun of the Rishi who, they said, should have remembered the maximum 'once bitten twice shy', the teacher quoted the Rishi as saying "if a bad person behaves badly—as is expected of him—should the good man also forget his goodness, and himself become bad?"

SELF-HELP AND THE VILLAGE WOMEN

KUMARI JAIKISHORI BHAN

'LET US ALL put our shoulder to the wheel' says a Minister in a brochure published by the Department of Community Development.

Who have to put their shoulder to the wheel? Is it the official agency or the people or both? Who are more enthusiastic? Who are more determined? Former or the latter?

We read that development is a programme of the people with Government assistance. Are then both to put their shoulders to the wheel? I doubt for who is then to steer it in the right direction?

Does it follow that official agency is to sit on the chariot, hold the rein and it is the people who are to put their shoulder to the wheel? The progress and the speed then will have to be determined by the amount of force that the people can apply. If the progress is slow, we are not to feel dejected or fret and fume. We must find out what is wrong. May be that they are not putting their shoulders to the wheel all together and in an organized manner. If the people lack organization their effort cannot take the chariot forward. What organization suits an effort in the economic field? The Directive Principles of the Constitution accepts a cooperative form of organization. The Planning Commission and the National Development Council have laid stress on such a cooperative form of organizations.

Do we then think that way? Who does? Who does not? The illiterate people do. They meet the propagandist half way because they need a remedy to the economic ills they face. The vested interests do not. It is not that they do not understand. They understand, perhaps too well. It is precisely therefore that they do not accept the cooperative way. Let us not therefore waste our breath in attempting to convince them.

The people who are affected matter. If they accept this form of organization, as they generally do, let us go ahead, and quickly, if the chariot is to move fast enough.

WOMEN OF SIHAI

I read in 'Statesman' of the 29th February 1960 that the women of Sihai Village of Meerut District took upon themselves the digging of a well to spare themselves the trouble of fetching water from a distant well. The men opposed and declared that what was good enough for their mothers and grandmothers was good enough for them. Undeterred the women set to work and after digging for days struck water at a depth of 55 feet to their great delight.

What does this news teach? The women who have wool to spare should sell wool to the women who need it. Let not the men barter it away for the snuff they need. To smear it on their teeth and turn the otherwise sparkling white teeth red, is not, I am afraid, more important and urgent than an addition to the family income.

There are 2,000 women who spin Pasham in the city of Srinagar, 450 women who can if they find Cocoon waste, spin silk thread. There are over a lakh of women in rural areas who spin wool. All must have work and wage and be in a position to add to the family budget and claim to be earning hands. Let the women strive and strive on their own is the lesson the women of Sihai village teach.

But why must the women strive? They must strive because they constitute half of the population. There can be no progress if half the population is unemployed or under-employed. They may be doing some work. What is important is to see if they work for the development of the country or for adding to the income of the family. A country which wants to catch up cannot and should not therefore allow any section of the population to sit idle.

Men may declare that women are decadent and debilitated. It is not true. Women have gigantic pent up energy and dynamism. If development is desired we have to chart a new course in which both men and women put their shoulder to the wheel.

A RICKSHAW PULLERS' COOPERATIVE

The following account of the Delhi Rickshaw Pullers' Cooperative provides an example of what cooperation can achieve for even the most helpless members of our society whose only capital equipment is their pair of hands.—Ed.

HAND-PULLED rickshaws were the popular means of transport in cities like Simla, Delhi and Calcutta before the beginning of the Second World war. It is only after 1940 that cycle rickshaws came into use in large numbers. Shri Lallu Singh now President of the Delhi Rickshaw Pullers' Cooperative Industrial Society who started rickshaw pulling in 1943 present a typical example of a successful rickshaw puller. He used to hire a cycle rickshaw from a private owner at about Rs. 5 per day and in spite of putting in very hard work for about 8 hours every day he could hardly eke out a bare subsistence living for himself. Hundreds of rickshaw pullers in Delhi have been living hand to mouth and they sleep literally on the road pavements. Most of them are given to gambling, drinking and all the bad ways to which pavement dwellers are exposed to. Shri Lallu Singh and his colleagues thought of joining together in July 1955 both for the purpose of owning rickshaws themselves as well as for undertaking their day-to-day repairs. Twenty-four of them joined hands and collected a modest capital of Rs. 345. From this humble beginning the rickshaw pullers' cooperative has gained strength and at present claims a membership of 455. The number of rickshaw it owns at present is 158. It has been able to raise a share capital of Rs. 39,167 and its profits after meeting all the expenditure on the repairs of the rickshaws and on the various amenities provided to its members amount to the sizable amount of Rs. 25,000 this year.

ECONOMIC BENEFIT

The life of Shri Lallu Singh is a living example of the economic benefits flowing from the working of the Rickshaw Pullers' cooperative society to its members. Shri Lallu Singh married in 1949 and is the father of four children at present. He has a bank balance of Rs. 2,500. He is able to earn about Rs. 180 per month from Cycle-rickshaw driving and is able to provide for himself and his family a reasonable standard of food and clothing. He lives in a Jumna Bazar hut but is looking forward to renting a decent apartment like his colleague Shri Jagannath. Shri Jagannath started rickshaw pulling in 1952 and has been now a bank balance of Rs. 1,800. He is preparing to get married within a couple of months. Shri Jagannath has now changed over to scooter driving and has also become owner of the scooter which he hired from the Rickshaw Pullers' Society. He has already paid back 3/4th of the price of the scooter. Both Shri Jagannath and Shri Lallu Singh continue to work on their vocation with enthusiasm and are in good health. They do not drink nor do they visit gambling houses.

The cooperative society charges only five annas from each of its members for using a cycle rickshaw for 8 hours. All the day-to-day repairs of the cycle rickshaws are undertaken by the members themselves. Extensive annual over-hauling is undertaken by the Society at its own cost for the purpose of getting it passed by the Licensing Authorities. For each scooter the Society charges a hire rent of Rs. 8 to Rs. 10 per day. The Society also runs a repair workshop in Kamla Market where the scooters are attended to every day by the technical staff of the Society. The body of the scooters is larger in size than the rickshaws plying in the cities. They bear both the names of the cooperative society and also of the driver as well as the telephone number of the Society which users can utilise for registering any complaints if they have to do so. Cycle rickshaw drivers and scooter drivers are provided with a uniform by the society. In cases of accidents, the cooperative society has undertaken to insure the rickshaws and scooters upto a sum of Rs. 3,000. The Society's lawyer deals with legal matters free of charge.

The strenous vocation both of rickshaw driving and scooter driving tax the physical

(*Continued on page 16*)

FROM THE STATES

RABI CAMPAIGN meetings are being organised in Community Development Blocks in several parts of India. Those attending these meetings witness demonstrations regarding nursery beds, line transplanting, seed treatment etc. and listen to talks on improved methods of agriculture, Japanese Method of Paddy Cultivation etc.

* * *

A COW-DUNG gas plant installed by a cultivator in Sirgapur village, in Humnabad Block, is attracting hundreds of people from the surrounding villages. Many of those who have seen it functioning have expressed a wish to own one to meet their needs of fuel and manure.

* * *

INHABITANTS of Awarnad village in Sullia Block constructed a primary school building, costing about Rs. 3,000, without any aid from the Government. So great was the enthusiasm of the people that the construction of the school building was completed within 3 months.

* * *

YOUNG SPORTS enthusiasts of Sullia have started the construction of a sports club, costing nearly Rs. 10,000, without any aid from the Government. The building, it is expected, would be ready for occupation within a month or so.

* * *

THE MAHILA Sangh of Sampaje village, in Sullia Block, started a new Balwadi on January 6, 1960. They hope that it would soon become a model to others in the Block. The village has been selected for intensive human development. Local people have already contributed liberally towards the development of this Balwadi.

* * *

THREE HUNDRED leading Gram Sahayaks, including some women, of the Chintamani Development Block are being taken on education tours of the poultry farm, fisheries centre and fruit research station at Hesaraghatta; the Dairy Research Institute and Botanical Gardens at Bangalore; Development Block Malavalli, Food Technological Research Institute and Sewage Farm at Mysore; the Mysore Sugar Factory Extension Training Centre and the V.C. Agricultural Farm at Mandya.

* * *

THIRTYONE Progressive farmers and 11 women from Karkal Block, led by the Social Education Organiser, Agriculture Extension Officer and a Gram Sevak, undertook a week-long tour from January 10 to 18, 1960. They visited many farms, Block headquarters, historical places, other institutions, covering a distance of eleven hundred miles in eight districts.

* * *

THE SCHOOL at Nasalapur, a progressive village in Raibag Development Block, was the venue of a Group Conference of Primary Teachers who got together to discuss their problems and to find solutions. Children from all the schools of the surrounding five villages also gathered at Nasalapur and put up a programme of physical and cultural activities, *e.g.* one-act plays, group songs. An exhibition of arts and crafts made by children of primary schools attracted attention.

A RICKSHAW PULLERS' CO-OPERATIVE

(*Continued from page* 15)

stamina of the drivers to a very great extent. The drivers are very much prone to lung troubles, stomach troubles and the cooperative society has, therefore, undertaken to provide them with a free supply of medicines prescribed by qualified doctors. A new scheme of regular medical check up of all members of the society is also being arranged.

There are about 3,000 cycle rickshaws in Delhi and there is a very great demand for membership of the Rickshaw Pullers' Cooperative Society. Due to shortage of funds for purchasing rickshaws and scooters, the society has restricted the membership. However, it is expected that in course of time large number of rickshaw pullers will be able to join the Society. A very encouraging feature of the cooperative society is that they are helping cycle rickshaw drivers to take to scooter-driving and becoming owners of scooters in course of time.

SUMMER TIME ACTIVITY

Brick making is a common sight in rural India during Summer months. Comparatively free from field operations, most of the villagers take to brick making either to meet their personal requirements or for profit. This activity is more marked in villages adjoining urban areas as markets for the finished product are readily available. In Block areas brick manufacture has received considerable attention. A number of brick kilns are run on cooperative basis.

OLD PRINCIPLE : NEW TECHNIQUES

Modern techniques have given a new-look to irrigation. Hand operated sluices control the flow of water in irrigation channels which cris-cross the fields.

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